



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Phone: 651-602-7900 Fax: 651-602-7914

Transmitted via email

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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 180-4-8

SUBJECT: CPA – Conservation Planning and Application

Purpose. Cancel Minnesota forms; MN-CPA-22 and MN-CPA-039.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2004.

This Bulletin formally cancels Minnesota forms MN-CPA-22 “Conservation Assistance Notes” and MN-CPA-039 “Resource Concerns Inventory and Estimate of Environmental Impacts.” These forms are no longer valid for conservation planning.

In lieu of the MN-CPA-22, we will be adopting the national form NRCS-CPA-6/6A “Conservation Assistance Notes” and/or the electronic assistance notes in Toolkit. Electronic copies of the NRCS-CPA-6/6A are attached.

We will be adopting the NRCS-CPA-52 “Environmental Evaluation” for all programs, including CRP. The State Office will be working on posting the new NRCS Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH) on our home page which will house National and State policy regarding environmental compliance. We will eventually transfer our state environmental compliance policy from its current location in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) to the NECH. This may take some time to complete. Procedures for completing environmental evaluations on CRP contracts were previously outlined in CRP Note #113. **The following policy applies until the NECH is posted on the MN-NRCS home page.**

BACKGROUND

Form **NRCS-CPA-52 “Environmental Evaluation Worksheet”** shall be used to inventory environmental concerns, and document impacts of proposed conservation practices. This procedure is to be used to determine whether a more detailed environmental assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA (GM-190, Part 410)

Compliance with NEPA applies to all NRCS assisted activities. One of the initial steps in the planning process is the initiation of an inventory, and environmental evaluation. The environmental evaluation integrates environmental concerns throughout the planning, installation, and operation of NRCS assisted programs. The evaluation shall inventory all environmental concerns within the area (typically tract) that is affected by the action; evaluate how each concern will be affected by the treatment; and present reasonable alternatives that will avoid or minimize negative impacts, or plan to mitigate for losses.

PROCEDURE:

As a minimum, complete sections A-E and J-R of Form NRCS-CPA-52. Sections F-I pertain to the inventory of resource concerns (SWAPA+H) and may be addressed during the planning process.

The environmental concern descriptions and references currently found in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (MN Amendment 17, April 2003) are to be used, including cultural resource undertakings and procedures as outlined in the “NRCS State Level Agreement with SHPO”.

Inventory phase: Utilize the environmental evaluation worksheet NRCS-CPA-52 during the planning process to inventory whether special environmental concerns listed in Section J, occur on the planning unit.

1. If none of the special environmental concerns are present or considered an undertaking, indicate that the practice is “***Not a Federal Action***” and no further analysis is required, sign and date the evaluation.

Evaluation phase: Practice application can occur at any time after development of the conservation plan. If the planning inventory indicated one or more special environmental concerns are present, complete Section J of the worksheet prior to practice application by indicating whether the proposed practice will have a positive (+), potentially adverse (-) or no effect (0) on the concern.

1. If the practice is “***Categorically Excluded,***” or has “***Already Been Analyzed***” in an existing NRCS environmental evaluation, no further analysis is required.
2. If all effects are either positive (+) or no effect (0), indicate that the practice is “***Not a Federal Action,***” sign and date the evaluation, and proceed with practice application.
Exception: Compliance with the Endangered Species Act may require further review for positive effect determinations. See MN NRCS policy at EFOTG Section II.
3. If any effect is potentially adverse (-), indicate that further analysis will be necessary prior to practice application, sign and date the evaluation, and contact the NRCS State Office for further guidance.

/s/

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

Electronic Attachments: NRCS-CPA-52
NRCS-CPA-6
NRCS-CPA-6a

DIST: ASTC
ARC
FO
SO-ENG
SO-WRS
SO-ECS